FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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Focus on Fellows:
Jordan Gass

Coastal Fellow Jordan Gass' dual fascinations with the wonders of biology and the beauty of the coast have been central to his educational and vocational choices.

As a child growing up on Long Island in New York State, "The beach was a big source of fun times, and I have been interested in science for most of my life," says Jordan. "My first real science teacher in sixth grade definitely instilled a love of the subject. And my high school biology teacher, Mrs. Wallace, taught me how to think scientifically and to methodically look for answers around me," he recalls.

As an undergraduate student in natural resources at Cornell University, "I discovered how much more interesting it was to look at biology coupled with the real-world environment—and I've been pursuing that type of career ever since," notes Jordan.

He learned still more about combining science and real-world studies—first as an undergraduate research assistant in a stream ecology lab and later during his two years as a Peace Corps volunteer. While in the Peace Corps in Jamaica, Jordan worked with a nongovernmental organization to help manage a protected area.

"Although I want to help conserve the environment, I've never really bought into the image some people have of an environmentalist—you know, 'Greenpeace and gung ho.' I'm interested in the science, but having the 'correct' answer doesn't matter if no one will listen. The Peace Corps experience definitely taught me some things about how to work with people in a practical way."

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NOAA Coastal Services Center
LINKING PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

A fisheries council in Jamaica encouraged local fishermen to buy into the concept of sustainability. "I saw that this sort of thing could work without an 'I'm right, you're wrong' dynamic, without coming into a place and telling people how they're supposed to live their lives," he says.

Jordan was given another opportunity to blend idealism with practicality when his program in Jamaica received geographic information system (GIS) software for tracking management data. "I was expected to be 'the local GIS guy' because I had learned a little about GIS during undergraduate field research—basically, I learned I was more stubborn than the computer. I was willing to stay with it and make it work, even when the software was confusing or caused problems," he laughs.

After the Peace Corps, Jordan received a master of environmental management degree in coastal environmental management and a certificate in geospatial analysis from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences. A graduate internship in Trinidad—as a sea turtle and fishery researcher—taught him the value of appealing to stakeholders' enlightened self-interest. At that time, fishermen casting their nets accidentally caught leatherback turtles, leading to a decline in the turtle population. Jordan worked with this group by saying, "Let me help you keep turtles out of your nets," rather than talking at them as a scientist and telling them that fishing is bad for turtles.

Now, as a coastal fellow, Jordan serves as the GIS coordinator for the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Coastal Zone Management. His initial assignment was to build GIS capacity by training staff members and providing support for the division's projects. However, the fellowship assignment has changed in a number of ways since Jordan began his work in the Virgin Islands, and he has delved into new and unexpected arenas.

Jordan helps to implement "e-permitting" by serving as a technical liaison between staff members and the contractor who is designing the database. With guidance from Lillian Moolenaar, the program's outreach coordinator, Jordan is also participating in local outreach events and helping to create printed and on-line outreach materials.

The most gratifying aspect of Jordan's work has been a project analyzing coral- and fish-monitoring data in collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Marine and Environmental Studies. The project, says Jordan, has helped him rekindle a longtime interest in fisheries management.

With his fellowship ending in the next few months, Jordan is still contemplating future plans. "For now, I want to cast my net wide, although I do know that I want to get back into marine resource management," explains Jordan. "The management side of things is more interesting to me because I can help make a decision and see the effects. As long as my future career is near the ocean, I'll be happy."

Focus on the Center

In a continual quest to create the best products and services for the coastal resource management community, the NOAA Coastal Services Center partners with agencies, organizations, academic institutions, and private industry. A few of the newer initiatives are highlighted below:

Merging of surface-water data – This program ensures that critical surface-water information is more widely available. NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have merged data and information into seamless Web services accessible to agency partners. Real-time observations from USGS sensors provide information on water temperature, turbidity, discharge, and other surface-water factors. These observations are made available via an interagency agreement between USGS and the NOAA Coastal Services Center. Contact *Doug.Marcy@noaa.gov.*

Restoration guidance – NOAA's top restoration research priority for the Southeast region is to learn more about restoring natural tidal flow through barrier removal, because such projects often benefit large spans of habitat. Now, two NOAA entities—the Coastal Services Center and Restoration Center—are partnering to develop Southeast regional guidance or best management practices for tidal hydrology restoration. Contact *Bethney.Ward@noaa.gov.*

Assistance for storm surge – Emergency managers and other officials need storm-surge aids that are timely and easy to use. A new software module enables users to view storm-surge guidance up to 24 hours before projected landfall of a tropical cyclone. An added tool option helps viewers consider hypothetical storm-surge scenarios. NOAA's Coastal Services Center and National Weather Service collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on this module. It is available in HURREVAC, a hurricane evacuation decision-support tool used by more than 10,000 government officials. For more information, visit *www.hurrevac.com* or contact *Doug.Marcy@noaa.gov.*

Community resilience publication – In response to the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, a new coastal community resilience guidebook has been created. The guidebook, titled *How Resilient Is Your Coastal Community? A Guide for Evaluating Coastal Community Resilience to Tsunamis and Other Hazards*, was developed by the NOAA Pacific Services Center and its partners: The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Agency for International Development, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center, and IRG-Tetra Tech. Approximately 140 other agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions from the Indian Ocean region also contributed. The guide is available for download at *www.us-iotws.gov.* A CD-ROM version is also available by contacting Russell Jackson at (808) 522-2299.

Focus on the Coastal Fellowship:

Sea Grant Endorsements

The NOAA Coastal Services Center has received the 2008–2010 Coastal Management Fellowship endorsements from Sea Grant. The Center received applications from 11 Sea Grant programs across the country. Using four criteria—academic performance and diversity of educational background, endorsement by the applicant's Sea Grant director, support from two letters of recommendation, and content of the applicant's goal statement—12 finalists will be selected from among these candidates.

A workshop to match states with fellows will take place in Charleston, South Carolina, from May 5 to 9, 2008. Of the finalists selected, six will be placed with a host state. Each of the selected host states will send its fellow mentor to the placement workshop, and the finalists will be brought to the workshop at the expense of the Center.

The workshop consists of an orientation, project proposal presentations, finalist presentations, finalist and host state interviews, and fellow matching. If a state does not find a suitable candidate during the workshop, it will be given the option to defer fellow placement for one year. States will only be allowed one deferment before they have to reapply. No contact between prospective hosts and finalists should be made before the placement workshop.

This year, the host states are California, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Washington. For more information on 2008 projects, visit the fellowship website at *www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/stateprojects.html* or contact the fellowship coordinator at *csc.fellowships@noaa.gov.*

Credits and Information

Fellow News is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center to relay information about the fellowship program and provide a forum for information exchange among fellows, mentors, Sea Grant, and the Center.

Please send your questions and suggestions for future editions to *csc.fellowships@noaa.gov*

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Upcoming Conferences and Events

APRIL

13 to 16: **Solutions to Coastal Disasters Conference**
Oahu, Hawaii
www.asce.org/conferences/

MAY

18 to 22: **Sixth National Monitoring Conference**
Atlantic City, New Jersey
http://acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2008/

18 to 23: **Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers**
Reno-Sparks, Nevada
www.floods.org/Conferences%2C%20Calendar/Reno-Sparks.asp

JUNE

9 to 27: **Summer Institute in Advanced Coastal Management**
Narragansett, Rhode Island
www.crc.uri.edu/index.php?actid=347

For more information on upcoming events, please visit *www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html*.

NOAA Coastal Services Center Training

Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS
May 1 to 2
NOAA Coastal Services Center
June 10 to 11
Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Coastal Community Planning and Development
April 15 to 16
North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve
May 8 to 9
Oregon Sea Grant
June 16 to 19
Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve

Coastal Inundation Mapping
June 12 to 13
Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

GIS Tools for Strategic Conservation Planning
June 16 to 19
National Conservation Training Center

Introduction to ArcGIS I
April 29 to 30
NOAA Coastal Services Center

Managing Visitor Use in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas
April 29 to May 1
Ocean Institute, Catalina Island Conservancy, and University of Southern California

Project Design and Evaluation
May 12 to 13
Hawaii Coastal Zone Management Program
June 10 to 11
Hudson River Estuary Program
June 17 to 18
Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Program

Public Issues and Conflict Management
June 24 to 26
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Remote Sensing for Spatial Analysts
April 29 to 30
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

For more information, please visit www.csc.noaa.gov/training/.

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